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Praying Effectually – or Not
Series: The Weeping Prophet
The Village Church at Shell Point
Evening Service
November 20, 2022

- I. Introduction
- A. Watching movie – “No, don’t do it!”
- II. **Background**
 - A. Turbulent times
 - 1. Expected under such catastrophic circumstances
 - 2. Gedaliah appointed as governor
 - a. Poor and dispossessed left in Judah after fall of Jerusalem
 - B. **Gedaliah**
 - 1. By all accounts, good guy
 - a. Strong family history
 - 2. **Son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan**
 - a. Shaphan, secretary of state under Josiah
 - (1) Involved in communicating the rediscovered law during temple renovation; key player in Josiah’s reforms
 - b. Shaphan had three sons, all of whom are seen to be genuine servants of the Lord
 - (1) **Ahikam** – assisted Jeremiah
 - (2) **Elasah** – delivered Jeremiah’s letter to exiles in Babylon
 - (3) **Gemariah** – tried to prevent Jehoiakim from burning scroll
 - 3. **Micaiah** – cousin, son of Gemariah; brought information to his father about Jeremiah’s scroll being read by Baruch
 - 4. So Gedaliah was appointed as governor by Nebuchadnezzar
 - a. Ruled from Mizpah, town in Benjamin
 - C. Jeremiah given options
 - 1. Stay under Gedaliah
 - 2. Go to Babylon; taken care of by Nebuzaradan, Babylonian captain of the guard
 - 3. Decides to stay with remnant in Judah
 - D. Jews from surrounding areas – returned to Judah
 - 1. Jews from Ammon, Moab, Edom
 - E. **Intrigue**
 - 1. Conspiracy – led by king of Ammon (Baalis) who sent **Ishmael, son of Nethaniah**
 - a. Nethaniah – of royal Davidic blood
 - b. Imagine the temptation – you’re the true offspring of David; take control!

2. Gedaliah warned of conspiracy
 - a. Naive to the presence of wickedness
 3. **Ishmael kills Gedaliah**
 - a. During banquet
 - b. Also killed entourage, including Jews and Babylonian soldiers
 - c. Also killed Jewish pilgrims; threw bodies in cistern
 4. Ishmael abducts Jews from Mizpah
 - a. Includes Jeremiah, king's daughters
 - b. Takes them to Ammon
 5. **Johanan** to the rescue
 - a. Overtakes Ishmael and the abductees
 - b. People turn on Ishmael, side with Johanan
 - c. Ishmael escapes to Ammon
- F. Johanan's problem
1. Jews have killed the governor appointed by Nebuchadnezzar
 - a. Also, Babylonians were killed in the episode
 2. What to do?
 3. Decide to seek refuge in Egypt
 - a. Reasonable decision
 - b. Afraid the Babylonians would seek revenge
 4. Decide to seek Jeremiah's viewpoint

III. **The Story**

- A. **Jeremiah 42:1-3** (ESV) —
1. 1 Then all the commanders of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least to the greatest, came near
 2. 2 and said to Jeremiah the prophet, "Let our plea for mercy come before you, and pray to the LORD your God for us, for all this remnant—because we are left with but a few, as your eyes see us—
 3. 3 that the LORD your God may show us the way we should go, and the thing that we should do."
- B. Seek Jeremiah's prayer on their behalf
1. Recognize their weakened position
 2. Ask God's will – what they should do
- C. **Jeremiah 42:4** (ESV) —
1. 4 Jeremiah the prophet said to them, "I have heard you. Behold, I will pray to the LORD your God according to your request, and whatever the LORD answers you I will tell you. I will keep nothing back from you."
- D. Jeremiah agrees to pray
1. Will give it to them straight
- E. **Jeremiah 42:5-6** (ESV) —
1. 5 Then they said to Jeremiah, "May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act according to all the word with which the LORD your God sends you to us.
 2. 6 Whether it is good or bad, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God

to whom we are sending you, that it may be well with us when we obey the voice of the LORD our God.”

- F. Great, give it to us straight
1. If we don't act in accordance with the Word, God is witness against us
 2. If we act in accordance, it will go well with us
- G. **Jeremiah 42:7–12** (ESV) —
1. 7 At the end of ten days the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah.
 2. 8 Then he summoned Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces who were with him, and all the people from the least to the greatest,
 3. 9 and said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to present your plea for mercy before him:
 4. 10 If you will remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull you down; I will plant you, and not pluck you up; for I relent of the disaster that I did to you.
 5. 11 Do not fear the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid. Do not fear him, declares the LORD, for I am with you, to save you and to deliver you from his hand.
 6. 12 I will grant you mercy, that he may have mercy on you and let you remain in your own land.
- H. Answer – stay in Judah
1. Motivating condition – God will build you up, not tear you down
 - a. God is with you – don't be afraid of Nebuchadnezzar
 - b. God is compassionate
- I. **Jeremiah 42:13–17** (ESV) —
1. 13 But if you say, ‘We will not remain in this land,’ disobeying the voice of the LORD your God
 2. 14 and saying, ‘No, we will go to the land of Egypt, where we shall not see war or hear the sound of the trumpet or be hungry for bread, and we will dwell there,’
 3. 15 then hear the word of the LORD, O remnant of Judah. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: If you set your faces to enter Egypt and go to live there,
 4. 16 then the sword that you fear shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine of which you are afraid shall follow close after you to Egypt, and there you shall die.
 5. 17 All the men who set their faces to go to Egypt to live there shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. They shall have no remnant or survivor from the disaster that I will bring upon them.
- J. Answer part 2
1. But – if you go to Egypt, all that you fear will come to pass there rather than here, in Judah
 - a. Sword, famine, pestilence
- K. **Jeremiah 42:18–22** (ESV) —
1. 18 “For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: As my anger and

my wrath were poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so my wrath will be poured out on you when you go to Egypt. You shall become an execration, a horror, a curse, and a taunt. You shall see this place no more.

2. 19 The LORD has said to you, O remnant of Judah, ‘Do not go to Egypt.’ Know for a certainty that I have warned you this day 20 that you have gone astray at the cost of your lives.
3. For you sent me to the LORD your God, saying, ‘Pray for us to the LORD our God, and whatever the LORD our God says, declare to us and we will do it.’
4. 21 And I have this day declared it to you, but you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God in anything that he sent me to tell you.
5. 22 Now therefore know for a certainty that you shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence in the place where you desire to go to live.”

L. Reason for Part 2

1. God knows their intentions
 - a. Going to Egypt all along
2. Their commitment to follow God whatever the answer was a sham
 - a. Wish I had a dollar for every time someone came to a pastor, asked him to pray for them about an issue, simply wanting the pastor to endorse what they already decided to do!

M. **Jeremiah 43:1–7** (ESV) —

1. 1 When Jeremiah finished speaking to all the people all these words of the LORD their God, with which the LORD their God had sent him to them,
2. 2 Azariah the son of Hoshaiah and Johanan the son of Kareah and all the insolent men said to Jeremiah, “You are telling a lie. The LORD our God did not send you to say, ‘Do not go to Egypt to live there,’
3. 3 but Baruch the son of Neriah has set you against us, to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they may kill us or take us into exile in Babylon.”
4. 4 So Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces and all the people did not obey the voice of the LORD, to remain in the land of Judah.
5. 5 But Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces took all the remnant of Judah who had returned to live in the land of Judah from all the nations to which they had been driven—
6. 6 the men, the women, the children, the princesses, and every person whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan; also Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch the son of Neriah.
7. 7 And they came into the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of the LORD. And they arrived at Tahpanhes.

N. Off they went to Egypt

IV. **Lessons on prayer**

- A. At first glance, seems like a good approach
 1. They recognize weakness of their position

2. They know God is capable of providing
 3. They need to know what to do
 4. They know a man of God – Jeremiah
 - a. Great track record
 5. Ask him to pray for them
- B. Request seems right on target
1. Recognize weakness and need
 2. Desire to know the will of God
 - a. Tell us the way we should walk
 - b. Tell us the thing we should do
 3. Just as Jesus taught disciples to pray
 - a. Thy will be done
 4. Promised to do whatever God wanted
 - a. Best possible position to be in when asking for God’s will
- C. What’s wrong with this prayer?
1. **Jeremiah 42:2** (ESV) —
 - a. 2 and said to Jeremiah the prophet, “Let our plea for mercy come before you, and pray to the LORD *your* God for us, for all this remnant—because we are left with but a few, as your eyes see us—
 2. **Lacked a relationship**
 - a. The Lord *your* God
 - b. People without their own genuine relationship with God
 - c. Know they belong to God in some sense
 - (1) Jews – the people of God
 - d. They don’t themselves have a personal relationship with God
 - (1) Later we would discover why that was the case – committed to idolatry
 - (2) Can’t have, serve two gods
 - e. Plenty of people who know about God; perhaps even have an orthodox view of God
 - (1) But they don’t have personal relationship with God
 3. Only way to have a relationship with God is by faith in Jesus Christ
 - a. **Hebrews 10:19–22** (ESV) —
 - (1) 19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,
 - (2) 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,
 - (3) 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God,
 - (4) 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
 - b. For these Jews – needed faith in the promises of God; messianic promises
 - c. **Jeremiah 33:15–16** (ESV) —
 - (1) 15 In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous

Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

- (2) 16 In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'
 - d. Since first advent, must have faith in Messiah
 - (1) Otherwise, no guarantee that prayers will be answered or even heard
 - (2) Because, God's answers are always vested in His Son
 - (3) We pray in the name of Christ
 - (4) Blessing of God comes through His love for His Son
 - e. Prayer is the best barometer of relationship with God
4. **Jeremiah 41:16–18** (ESV) —
- a. 16 Then Johanan the son of Kareah and all the leaders of the forces with him took from Mizpah all the rest of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, after he had struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam—soldiers, women, children, and eunuchs, whom Johanan brought back from Gibeon.
 - b. 17 And they went and stayed at Geruth Chimham near Bethlehem, intending to go to Egypt 18 because of the Chaldeans.
 - c. For they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land.
5. **Late**
- a. Already determined a course of action; on their way
 - b. Prayer for God to sanction their already determined course of action
 - (1) Ryken: The trouble is, too many people do not start asking those questions until they are halfway down to Egypt. They only pretend to want to know God's will for their lives. What they really want is for God to put his rubber stamp on their plans they have already made. They say, "I've already made up my mind, but by the way, Lord, is this really what you want me to do? They start to act before they begin to pray.
 - c. Prayer should precede, rather than follow action
 - (1) Fire, ready, aim
6. The late Richard Burr's ministry has the right order
- a. Carried on the prayer ministry of J. Edwin Orr until he passed away a few years ago
 - b. Pray, Think, Act Ministries
 - c. **Philippians 4:6–9** (ESV) —
 - (1) 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything **by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving** let your requests be made known to God.

- (2) 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- (3) 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, **think** about these things.
- (4) 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—**practice** these things, and the God of peace will be with you.
- d. How often do we and others pray backwards like these Jews did
 - (1) We plan, determine what we should do
 - (2) Then ask God to bless it
- e. Derek Kidner: All along (had they realized it) they had regarded God as a power to enlist, rather than as a lord to obey; and they still cannot believe that his will can be radically different from their own.
- f. Reason for 42.13-22 – warning passage
- g. Oh no, don't go!
 - (1) Even though you know they're going to go
- 7. **Jeremiah 42:8–12** (ESV) —
 - a. 8 Then he summoned Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces who were with him, and all the people from the least to the greatest,
 - b. 9 and said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to present your plea for mercy before him:
 - c. 10 If you will remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull you down; I will plant you, and not pluck you up; for I relent of the disaster that I did to you.
 - d. 11 Do not fear the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid. Do not fear him, declares the LORD, for I am with you, to save you and to deliver you from his hand.
 - e. 12 I will grant you mercy, that he may have mercy on you and let you remain in your own land.
- 8. **Lacked faith**
 - a. Trust in God
 - b. Trust in nature and character
 - c. Trust in disposition to bless His people
 - d. They were afraid – reasonable
 - (1) Nothing wrong with being afraid
 - (2) Every reason for them to be afraid
 - (a) Babylonians had the capacity to devastate them; already had devastated Judah and Jerusalem
 - (b) Had rejected the Babylonian appointed leader
 - (c) Had killed some Babylonian soldiers along with the Jewish leaders

- e. Right thing to do – pray when afraid
 - f. But the basic answer to the prayer
 - (1) God is favorably disposed to bless them (42.10)
 - (2) God is greater than Nebuchadnezzar; with them to save them from Him (42.11)
 - (a) Implication – greatness of God in relation to earthly ruler
 - (3) God is compassionate by nature (42.12)
 - (a) **Exodus 34:6–7** (ESV) — 6 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...
 - (b) Statement repeated frequently in scripture
 - g. Fundamental nature of prayer is to trust the nature and character of God as revealed in Scripture
 - (1) **Hebrews 11:6** (ESV) — 6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.
 - h. Eugene Peterson: Johanan and the people respected Jeremiah enough to ask for his prayers, but they didn’t trust God enough to follow his counsel.
9. **Jeremiah 42:20–21** (ESV) —
- a. 20 that you have gone astray at the cost of your lives. For you sent me to the LORD your God, saying, ‘Pray for us to the LORD our God, and whatever the LORD our God says, declare to us and we will do it.’
 - b. 21 And I have this day declared it to you, but you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God in anything that he sent me to tell you.
10. **Lacked sincerity**
- a. Prayer is useless unless we can be transparent with God
 - (1) He already knows who we are and what we are about
 - (2) Knows the thoughts and intentions of our hearts
 - b. Calvin: We have then here set before us the hypocrisy of that people, so that we may learn that whenever we ask what pleases God, we should bring a pure and sincere heart, so that nothing may prevent or hinder us immediately to embrace whatever God may command us.
 - c. Lack of sincerity reflected in how they responded to Jeremiah’s answer
 - (1) Denied it was the word of God
 - (a) **Jeremiah 43:2** (ESV) — 2 Azariah the son of

Hoshaiah and Johanan the son of Kareah and all the insolent men said to Jeremiah, “You are telling a lie. The LORD our God did not send you to say, ‘Do not go to Egypt to live there...’

(2) Claimed it was the word of man, answer generated by human machinations

(a) **Jeremiah 43:3** (ESV) — 3"...but Baruch the son of Neriah has set you against us, to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they may kill us or take us into exile in Babylon.”

V. **Application**

A. Make sure your prayer for the will of God...

1. Based on **Saving Relationship** with God through Jesus

2. First thing to do, the **First work**

a. Pray, think, then act (Burr)

3. **Pray in faith**

a. In the person of God – His nature and character

b. In line with the disposition of God – wants to bless all who genuinely seek Him

4. **Pray with sincerity**

a. Setting aside ulterior motives

b. Seeking only the glory of God